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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

(Item 4 (a))

Section 16, Economic and social development in Africa

1. At its 17th and 18th meetings, on 21 and 22 June 2001, the Committee considered section 16, Economic and social development in Africa, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. Satisfaction was expressed with the improvement in the presentation of the fascicle, which met the same standards as other budget sections. The programme narrative was clear and in line with the text of programme 14 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The improvement in the presentation of the fascicle as well as in the narrative was noted.

4 The view was expressed that the narrative of section 16 as well as expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement differed in part from the text of programme 14 of the medium-term plan. While the emphasis in the medium-term

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plan was placed on the reduction of poverty, the overall objective in the fascicle was to help African countries to deepen economic and social reforms and accelerate and sustain development. It was also noted that the expected accomplishment on increased mobilization of financial resources for the development of Africa under subprogramme 2 of programme 14 of the medium-term plan was missing from the fascicle. The view was expressed that the long-term objective of reducing poverty by half by 2015 should be reflected in the fascicle. It was also considered that debt reduction should have received more emphasis in the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

5. The view was expressed that the narrative of the section should have included references to the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the United Nations Special System-wide Initiative on Africa, and that more emphasis should have been placed on operational activities in order to provide advice to Member States to assist them in their development efforts.

6. The view was expressed that the real growth of 1.6 per cent was very small and that the Commission should be provided with more resources to match the ambitions indicated in the programme.

7. It was considered that, in future, it would be necessary to provide greater specificity in the wording of expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, particularly with respect to the impact and effectiveness of programme outputs. It was recalled that, in 1996, ECA had carried out an exercise of reprioritization of its programme of activity through 2001 and that, subsequently, the Commission had discontinued a number of outputs that had not had the desired impact. In that connection, continuous review of outputs and reallocation of resources to priority issues was encouraged.

8. Regret was expressed at the continuing high vacancy rate pertaining at ECA which would, should it continue unchecked, seriously hamper accomplishments and delay unnecessarily Africa's economic and social recovery.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee recommended that publications and meetings should be more action-oriented and focus on issues that have a concrete impact on the development of African countries.

10. The Committee also recommended that immediate steps should be taken to decrease substantially the persistently high vacancy rate at ECA, which negatively affects programme delivery.

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 16, Economic and social development in Africa, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, subject to the following modifications:

Paragraph 16 A.1

The last sentence of the paragraph should read:

"The main objective of development in Africa is the reduction of poverty, an objective that was reaffirmed in Copenhagen in 1995 at the World Summit for Social Development, which set a target of reducing poverty by half by 2015."

Table 16 A.9

Add the following under expected accomplishments:

"Increased mobilization of financial resources for the development of Africa."

Add the following two indicators of achievement:

"(iii) A substantial increase in financial flows to the countries of the region;

(iv) The number of countries that have adopted investment and trade liberalization policies, including the removal of physical and non-physical barriers."

Table 16 A.13

At the beginning of indicator of achievement (b), add the words "An increase in".

Table 16 A.15

Under expected accomplishments, add a new expected accomplishment (d), reading:

"Increased Internet connectivity of African countries."

At the end of indicator of achievement (b) add the words "Number of countries that, with the support of ECA, have improved their statistical systems, leading to the collection and dissemination of timely and reliable data."

Add a new indicator of achievement (d), reading:

"An increase in the number of African Internet hosts and countries with direct connections."

Table 16 A.17

Add the following two new expected accomplishments:

"(c) Increased, effective and harmonized utilization of transboundary water resources;

"(d) Substantial implementation of the Framework of Action adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications".

Add the following new indicator of achievement:

"(c) An increase in positive results of the implementation of the Framework of Action for transport and communications".